

Our readings continue the theme of stewardship

But today's also have a special challenge for us

We are called to find an honest balance

We are not called to be socialists

We are not called to be communists

But at the same time

We are not called to be pure capitalists or materialists

All of these economic systems have a serious fault at their core

They disregard human dignity, made in the image of God

They either try to deny that God exists

They try to replace Him with Government programs

Or they try to reduce mankind to a cost of production

Simply something that can be replaced when no longer useful

We are called to be stewards

In whatever role we play in this world

We are here to care for creation

To care for ourselves

And to care for those that cannot care for themselves

Amos describes what not to do in our 1st reading

Woe to the complacent

This is one of the gravest warnings in the Old Testament

Basically he is saying

Damned be the complacent

Lying on beds of ivory

Eating calves and lambs

At a time when these were valuable commodities

Lambs were used for their wool

Calves to add to a herd

So they were sacrificing tomorrow's wealth

For today's opulence

Drinking from bowls

Not sipping from cups

Using the best oils to anoint and perfume themselves

They are ignoring the condition of their brothers and sisters

While they gorge themselves

There was no limit to their spending on their luxuries

But they wouldn't lift a finger to help those in need

Amos warns them

They will be conquered by their enemies

Driven into exile for their sins

Our Gospel then looks at an individual

The rich man is unnamed

But the poor man is identified

Jesus gives a description of both men's lifestyle

The rich man

Fine purple garments

To color clothing purple was very expensive in those days

Fine linen

Dining sumptuously each day

Lazarus

Lying at his door

Covered with sores

Not a leper; or he would not have been allowed to be near another

Wanting nothing more than the scraps that fell to the floor

Dogs would come and lick his sores

And more than likely they would get those scraps

Eventually both men die

The rich man himself recognizes Lazarus next to Abraham

Send Lazarus to me to cool my tongue

Although he had ignored Lazarus in his sufferings

Now he asks Lazarus to come to his aid

For the rich man, everything is about himself

When he asks to have Lazarus go to his brothers

We discover they are both Abraham's children

The rich man was not ignoring a pagan foreigner

He was ignoring one of his own

Just as he had ignored Moses and the teaching of the prophets

Even if someone came back from the dead

He would ignore that person as well

This meaning of this parable is not that wealth is evil

It does not praise poverty for poverty's sake

It is about what we do with our wealth

It is about how we live our poverty

Whether it is poverty of body

Poverty of spirit

Poverty of soul

There is also wealth of time, talent and treasure

In whatever form it may take

We will be judged on account of our actions in this life

In the letter to the Hebrews

We are told that it is appointed for every person to die but once

There is no going back

The rich man could not go back

But neither could Lazarus

Only one would ever go back

That one is Jesus Christ

While we walk this earth

We are the rich man's brothers and sisters

Do we listen to the one who rose from the dead?

Last week we were told we cannot have 2 masters

We cannot serve both God and mammon

This week we see what happens when we try

The rich man was not evil

He did not do bad things

He wasn't a thief

He wasn't a murderer

He didn't slander or adulterer

He failed not with sins of commission

But with sins of omission

He had opportunities every day to do something

Anything --- to help the poor man at his step

Yet he refused

He was indifferent to the suffering of his brother

Because of his wealth, he was complacent

St Paul gives us the antidote to a life of complacency

Pursue righteousness and justice

Practice devotion, faith, love

Patience and gentleness

These are the key ingredients of a healthy, vibrant spiritual life

If our spiritual life seems to be kind of stagnant

If we think of ourselves as a good person

But realize something is missing

Maybe it is time to start looking not at what we have done

Sins of commission

But look at what we don't do

Sins of omission

First we have to identify the Lazarus in our life

We have to see him

And ask: why has God placed this person ---

These people in my life?

It is far too easy to keep them anonymous

But they are not anonymous

And when we have identified them

Then decide on a course of action

There are three classic Christian responses

1st – to help one to one

2nd – combine our efforts with others

To help many Lazarus's

3rd – to ask why this condition exists in our world today

And what can we do about it?

The challenge is laid out

We are here not only for ourselves

We are in a covenant

It is a covenant we live in our families

It is a covenant we share with our faith community

It is a covenant we share with all human beings

A covenant with God and ourselves

If I were called home today

Despite my words

Would my actions stand with the rich man?

Or with Lazarus?